

A<sub>4</sub> 10:1 to 40:1, or a silica content of at least 10% by weight. The invention further relates to a process for the production of silica-based particles comprising the steps of: (a) acidifying an aqueous silicate solution to a pH of from 1 to 4 to form an acid sol; (b) alkalisating the acid sol at an SiO<sub>2</sub> content within the range of from 4.5 to 8% by weight to; (c) allowing particle growth of the alkalisated sol for at least 10 minutes, or heat-treating the alkalisated sol at a temperature of at least 30°C; and then (d) alkalisating the obtained sol to a pH of at least 10.0. The invention further relates to silica-based particles obtainable by the process, the use of the silica-based particles as drainage and retention aids in the production of paper as well as a process for the production of paper from an aqueous suspension containing cellulosic fibres, and optional filler, in which silica-based particles and at least one charged organic polymer are added to the cellulosic suspension.

#### Remarks

This preliminary amendment amends the specification, claims and abstract, and adds new claims without the addition of new matter thereby. A marked version showing the amendments is attached hereto. Presently, claims 1 and 22-40 are pending.

Early and favorable consideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



Lainie E. Parker  
Attorney for Applicants  
Registration No.: 36,123

Akzo Nobel Inc.  
Intellectual Property Dept.  
7 Livingstone Avenue  
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522-3408  
(914) 674-5466